



Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 17, 2020

IN REPLY REFER TO:
CN 20-492

The Honorable Clay Higgins
U.S. House of Representatives
One Lakeshore Drive
Suite 1670
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70629

Dear Congressman Higgins:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of your constituent, Mr. Bruce Merchant, President of Merchant Broadcasting, Inc. (MBI), which is the licensee of KEZM(AM), Sulphur, Louisiana. Mr. Merchant contacted your office concerning KEZM's operation and a proposed modification to the Commission's interference protection rules for certain classes of AM stations. I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

According to Commission records, KEZM is and has been operating pursuant to a special temporary authorization (STA), initially granted in July 2011 and renewed consistently to the present. The STA permits the station to operate a non-directional antenna from a site different than the one specified in its license, the lease for which terminated in 2011. The most recent extension of the STA was granted on June 9, 2020. To date, MBI has not filed an application to permanently modify its license. MBI has indicated that its best permanent option, which avoids building out a new transmitter and the associated costs, is to diplex the signal of KEZM and KLCL(AM) using the existing KLCL antenna, but that this solution does not comply with the Commission's current AM interference protection rules.

As Mr. Merchant notes in his correspondence, the Commission has established a proceeding to revitalize the AM service. Among the recent proposals set forth in the proceeding is the reduction of signal protection afforded to Class A AM stations, introducing potential for other stations to increase power. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) raised objections to this proposal, arguing that reduced protection would negatively impact the Emergency Alert System, which relies on some Class A AM stations as Primary Entry Point stations for messaging.

(<https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10129789030067/FEMA%20Comments%20on%20AM%20Revitalization%202nd%20RO%20-%20Approved.pdf>) The Audio Division of the Media Bureau is considering the full record developed in the proceeding, but FEMA's concerns weigh heavily against the change in protection standards.

I hope that this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sima Nilsson

Attorney-Advisor, Media Bureau